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TITLE: Representativeness of HIV/AIDS Cases Interviewed in the Supplement to HIV/AIDS Surveillance (SHAS) Project

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BACKGROUND/OBJECTIVES: The Supplement to HIV/AIDS Surveillance (SHAS) project has interviewed HIV-infected persons to collect information on demographics, sexual and drug using behaviors, medical/social services, and medical therapy and adherence since 1990. We summarize data from SHAS project and examine the representativeness of these data.

METHODS: Persons >18 years of age and reported to 12 state/local health departments through HIV/AIDS surveillance were eligible for the SHAS interview; both population-based and facility-based sampling methods were used. Cases interviewed in SHAS were compared to cases reported nationally through surveillance activities to the HIV/AIDS reporting system (HARS).

RESULTS: Between 1990-1998, 20,813 persons (78% AIDS and 22% HIV) were interviewed. For this period, the distribution of characteristics of AIDS cases interviewed in SHAS (n=16,179) compared with all reported AIDS cases nationally (n=569,632): by sex, 80% were men in SHAS vs. 83% in HARS; by age, 19% vs. 17% were 18-29 yrs old and 48% vs. 45% were 30-39 yrs old; by race/ethnicity, 44% vs. 38% were black, 36% vs. 42% white, and 18% vs. 19%, Hispanic; by risk/exposure group 47% vs. 45% were men who have sex with men (MSM), 24% vs. 27% injecting drug users (IDU), 9% vs. 6% MSM/IDU, 15% vs. 11% heterosexual contact, and 6% vs. 10% other/undetermined; by region, 11% vs. 30% were reported in the Northeast, 50% vs. 35% in the South, and 6% vs. 10% in the Midwest. Comparison of HIV cases interviewed in SHAS vs. nationally reported in HARS showed similar comparability.

CONCLUSIONS: Interview-based information is valuable for prevention program planning and evaluation. The SHAS methodology is a practical way to obtain reasonably representative interview-based information on a variety of prevention-related issues. Because SHAS is linked to surveillance, we can evaluate the extent to which cases interviewed are representative of the reported infected population.

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